

NAVY Future of the Fleet **RECRUITER**

NRC Helps RTC Establish ROM

Pages 6-8

NRC Meets Shipping Goal in FY20

Pages 10-11

Accelerated NRC Transformation - All Engines Ahead Full

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July - September 2020
Vol. 68 No. 3

From the Admiral

Rear Admiral Dennis Velez
Commander, Navy Recruiting Command



Recruiting Nation!

Huge congratulations to all of you! We made AC enlisted mission for FY20, 39.6K, which is monumental considering the massive shift in our methods and prospecting due to the coronavirus pandemic. You have all adapted very well to the “new normal” and are using your creativity and critical thinking skills to positively affect recruiting in this environment.

One of my greatest joys in this job is visiting you all across the nation. This quarter I visited recruiting stations across seven districts and NTAGs, and I have to say how pleased I am by your positive attitudes as you work hard every day to ensure we stay on mission. The coronavirus pandemic has presented a myriad of challenges across Recruiting Nation, but you have all succeeded in finding innovative ways to keep us on track. I’ve also received valuable feedback from many of you, and I want you to know that I take this to heart and I am working to fix what I can as quickly as possible!

These past months have presented new opportunities for us as our country has experienced a shift in social consciousness. Now more than ever it is imperative that we have courageous conversations and double down on our efforts to positively impact diversity in our Navy. Growing more diverse leaders starts with you, and I expect each of you to take a closer look at how we can do better recruiting these future diverse leaders for our Navy. We must continue to have courageous conversations with each other and explore ways we can each contribute to the successful accession and progression of under-represented minorities. I encourage each of you to continue joining our diversity roundtables as we discuss these important topics, take your feedback, and forge a more informed path for our recruiting efforts.

Over the next few months you will see our latest seasons of “Sailor Versus” and “Faces of the Fleet” roll out. Our Marketing and Advertising team captured excellent content using Fleet support as they found new ways to capture impactful stories during this unprecedented time. Please continue using this content to connect with prospects in the virtual space.

By the end of 2020 every one of our districts will be transformed into NTAGs, thanks to our accelerated Transformation timeline, three years ahead of schedule! This is a monumental feat, and we wouldn’t have been able to accomplish this without your diligent efforts, and especially the hard work of our Transformation team. The pandemic highlighted the benefits that our upgraded technologies, organizational structures, and e-talent teams offered to Navy recruiting, and I expect that we will drive ahead to finish Fiscal Year 2020 strong.

Take care of each other and continue to lead by example.

Rear Adm. Dennis Velez

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FRONT COVER:

FORT MCCOY, Wis. (Sept. 13, 2020) Electronics Technician 1st Class Erik Outlaw, a Recruit Division Commander (RDC) assigned to Recruit Training Command (RTC) in Great Lakes, Ill., stands in formation on board Fort McCoy, a U.S. Army training center in western Wisconsin. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Nikita Custer)



BACK COVER:

PORT CANAVERAL, Fla. (Sept. 23, 2020) The Navy’s newest guided-missile destroyer, the USS Delbert D. Black (DDG 119), arrives at Port Canaveral. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Sarah Villegas)

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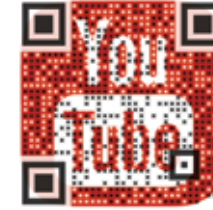
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From Michigan to Millington - Navy Recruiting Command Welcomes New National Chief Recruiter



Story by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Preston Jarrett

MILLINGTON, Tenn. (NNS) – Long before her selection as National Chief Recruiter (NCR), the most senior enlisted adviser to Commander, Navy Recruiting Command, Master Chief Navy Counselor (Recruiter) Heather Charara saw her career going a totally different direction.

As she left her ethnically-diverse hometown of Dearborn, Michigan, Charara was initially interested in enlisting into the Master-at-Arms rate but learned she was unable to due to its requirements at the time.

“At the time, you couldn’t join the Navy as a Master-at-Arms until you were already an E-4,” said Charara. “My secondary thing I always thought was really cool was being a firefighter. I always thought it’d be really neat to work in fire service or some kind of emergency disaster management, etc. I went to MEPS (Military Entrance Processing Station), and they said ‘Hey, there’s this really great job for you. You could be a fireman,’ and I was like ‘Oh, that sounds great,’ so I joined the Navy as an undesignated fireman.”

Upon completion of boot camp and “A” school, Charara felt overwhelmed as she

reported for her first duty station onboard submarine tender USS Emory S. Land (AS 39), homeported to La Maddalena, Italy. Not only was she flying overseas within months of joining the Navy, but the 9/11 attacks had recently taken place while she was on leave visiting her family. This was specifically concerning because of her Lebanese descent.

“I remember being scared to go back to the ship,” said Charara. “I got there, and everyone was so excited, and they were so worried about me because they were seeing the news and the riots in my hometown. It never made me so proud in my life to be a part of an organization where people valued each other for who they are and not for their background or ethnicity.”

While on Emory S. Land, Charara would eventually strike into the rating Machinist’s Mate before cross-rating to Damage Controlman during her first sea tour. She then reenlisted for orders to recruiting duty. She reported to Navy Recruiting Orientation Unit in Pensacola, Florida, on her 22nd birthday and then was sent to Navy Recruiting District (NRD) Michigan.

“My initial recruiting challenge, the biggest thing for me, was that I was recruiting back home,” said Charara. “Being young, coming home and not having a ton of Navy-esque experience was a bit challenging for me. I had to constantly remind myself for a long time ‘hey, I’m still in the Navy. Even if the Navys not here, I’m the Navy, and I’m here.’”

Charara left NRD Michigan in December 2008 and transferred to NRD Miami where she was promoted to chief petty officer. Years later she reported to NRD Los Angeles, where she was promoted to senior chief petty officer and with only 14 years of service, Charara was selected for master chief.

After serving on both coasts, she headed inland to Millington, Tennessee, working as the Region East officer assistant chief recruiter until she returned to NRD Miami as their chief recruiter in 2016.

Even after achieving the highest enlisted ranking in the Navy, Charara kept pushing forward. Upon completion of her second tour at NRD Miami, she returned to Millington as the Region West chief recruiter before finally achieving her career goal of becoming the NCR.

“I never really expected that this would ever be a job that I would hold,” said

Charara. “It was always a goal. It was always in a grasp of something. This is the pinnacle of the career field as a Navy Counselor (Recruiter). When you’re in here, and you’re doing these jobs, and you’re a chief recruiter, that’s the ultimate goal for most of us.”

Despite her numerous professional successes, Charara knows she didn’t get there on her own. She remains thankful of those who’ve helped her along the way and continues to use her position as the NCR to help others around her.

“Taking this job has been the greatest honor of my career,” said Charara. “This is an opportunity, and this isn’t a job I took for me. This is a job that I applied to for the betterment of the organization, so I hope I continue to make people proud and continue to do a good job and do right by the Navy, do right by the admiral and do right by the Sailors. My e-mail is open. My door is open. I want to make things easier, so if there’s any way or any great ideas that are out there, I welcome those and hope that together, we can make recruiting the greatest command in the Navy.”

Navy Recruiting Command’s goal is to attract the highest quality candidates to assure the ongoing success of America’s Navy and provide the Navy the Nation needs. 🇺🇸

▼ BOSTON (Sept. 1, 2020) - USS Constitution Command Senior Chief, Jans Valdespou provides a guided tour to Navy Recruiting Command’s National Chief Recruiter, Master Chief Navy Counselor Heather Charara, and Region East Chief Recruiter, Master Chief Navy Counselor Tony Dyer. (Photo by Chief Mass Communication Specialist Joshua Wahl)



CNRC Helps RTC Establish ROM Operations at Fort McCoy

Story by Chief Mass Communication Specialist Elijah G. Leinaar, CNRC Public Affairs Office



▲ Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Equipment) 1st Class Rose-Laure Bazile, a Recruit Division Commander (RDC) assigned to Recruit Training Command (RTC) in Great Lakes, Ill., conducts recruit training on board Fort McCoy, a U.S. Army training center in western Wisconsin. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Nikita Custer)

FORT MCCOY, Wis. (NNS) – Since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, the Navy has taken great care to protect its newest recruits from the virus, establishing precautions and measures that enabled the service to graduate more than 17,000 recruits through boot camp since March. To support this mission-essential undertaking, Sailors from within the MyNavyHR enterprise volunteered to oversee and lead the establishment of the restriction of movement (ROM) site for recruits at Fort McCoy.

In August, 13 Sailors from Commander, Navy Recruiting Command boarded a bus with 13 other Sailors from various commands based out of Millington, Tennessee, and headed for Wisconsin. The all-volunteer crew of 26 Sailors was mixed in rank spanning from E5 to E9, and

their Navy experience was as diverse as their personalities.

"This is a one of a kind mission," said Chief Cryptologic Technician (Interpretive) Justin West. "Even though there was no previous blue print to follow, the ability of Sailors to come together and accomplish so much in such a short amount of time has been nothing short of awesome."

West alluded to the one goal this team shared, which was to establish a ROM site for Navy recruits to be tested for coronavirus and wait in a 14-day holding pattern at a safe environment that mitigates their risk of spreading the virus before being transported to Recruit Training Command (RTC) in Great Lakes, Illinois.

"It's a testament to our Navy that Sailors have come together so quickly and efficiently

to produce something of this caliber," said West, assigned to Commander Navy Recruiting Command. "Everyone has shown an extremely high level of professionalism and motivation to draw from, and that has helped us tremendously."

The Millington team met up with RTC staff Sept. 14 and immediately began work on preparing open bay Army barracks for the weekly arrival of new recruits.

"The beginning was complicated as everyone showed up to Fort McCoy," said Command Senior Chief Mark Rayner, RTC Fort McCoy ROM detachment senior enlisted leader. "Everyone pulled together, and after just two days, barracks were being set-up, training sessions were being held, and teams were being established ready to receive the first 600 recruits the following week. The individuals here really displayed the agility and grit that U.S. Navy Sailors bring to the fight and they weren't going to let this mission fail."

Establishing a ROM location at Fort McCoy, a U.S. Army training center in western Wisconsin, ensures long-term safety and security of recruits. It also consolidates support staff in one location while continuing to execute the essential task of training the Navy's newest Sailors.

"The benefits of the Fort McCoy ROM site are endless," said Rayner. "We are able to operate a mission totally focused on restriction of movement, while independent from RTC's training mission. Our open bay barracks layout provides a perfect balance to be able to keep the ROM recruit population in small groups to reduce risk while allowing for around-the-clock active leadership and development from the recruit supervisors in the barracks."

Essentially all inbound recruits receive the basics in rank recognition, general orders, the Sailor's Creed, RTC's chain of command and more. Each barracks is equipped with TVs and tablets where staff stream curriculum. Staff are able to get to the core of warrior toughness training and incorporate it into their daily routine.

Some of the boot camp survival skills start at the barracks where they learn how to live together in large groups. Other skills come from forming up in small groups together to go to the base chow hall for each meal. In the end, leaders could see the two-week ROM period was better preparing recruits for when they arrive to basic training in Great Lakes.

"Without a doubt, the recruits coming out of Fort McCoy will be better prepared with a foundation of basic military knowledge," said Rayner.

In July, CNRC increased shipping to an average of 1,200 recruits per week while maintaining safety standards for coronavirus, while focusing primarily on digital prospecting to recruit using online



◀ Rear Adm. Jamie Sands, commander, Naval Service Training Command in Great Lakes, Ill., right, speaks with Senior Chief Culinary Specialist Matthew Susienka about galley operations. (Photo by Chief Mass Communication Specialist Elijah G. Leinaar)



◀ Sailors distribute sea-bags to new recruits on board Fort McCoy, a U.S. Army training center in western Wisconsin. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Nikita Custer)



◀ Machinery Repairman 1st Class Michael Jahnke, a Recruit Division Commander (RDC) assigned to Recruit Training Command (RTC) in Great Lakes, Ill., poses for an environmental portrait on board Fort McCoy. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Nikita Custer)



◀ Recruits wash their hands in preparation for chow on board Fort McCoy. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Nikita Custer)



◀ Recruits eat chow on board Fort McCoy, a U.S. Army training center in western Wisconsin. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Nikita Custer)



◀ Sailors organize supplies prior to new recruit arrivals on board Fort McCoy, a U.S. Army training center in western Wisconsin. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Nikita Custer)



◀ Chief Operations Specialist Anthony Guinn, a recruit division commander assigned to Recruit Training Command (RTC) in Great Lakes, IL, conducts recruit receiving and departing training at Fort McCoy. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Nikita Custer).



◀ Lt. Cmdr. Brittany Mertz, center, assigned to preventative medicine at Recruit Training Command, Great Lakes, IL, discusses barracks safety with Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Carmen B. Roman, left, and Chief Machinist's Mate Cody Partin, right, prior to new Navy recruit arrivals on board Fort McCoy. (Photo by Chief Mass Communication Specialist Elijah G. Leinaar)



◀ Recruits stand in line for chow on board Fort McCoy, a U.S. Army training center. Recruit Training Command (RTC) is working with the Army at Fort McCoy to establish a restriction of movement (ROM) site for Navy recruits prior to entering boot camp. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Nikita Custer)

resources, outreach through e-sports and social media. Consequentially, the Navy was the only military branch in fiscal year 2020 to make their active duty enlisted recruit-shipping goal. The Navy's eagerness to work with the Army to create a ROM site is an example of the creative problem solving needed to man the fleet.

"The entire Navy relies on this mission as we are the first stop for new recruits before moving on to the Navy's only boot camp," said Rayner. "The Fleet is in need of skilled junior Sailors and this mission has allowed the Navy to be the only branch to stay on track, reach the accession goal for the fiscal year, provide new Sailors to the follow-on training, and in turn add the needed support in the Fleet. The Fort McCoy ROM mission reduces risk to force while maximizing throughput of new personnel through the training pipeline."

The requirement for support from Millington Sailors ended after a month, as RTC brought in 135 staff to continue the ROM mission there, and the 26 volunteers returned to Millington.

"We currently have 90 recruit barracks, 10 staff barracks, 11 Admin and Supply buildings, and six classrooms," said Chief Aviation Structural Mechanic Jessica Barnes, assigned as the Fort McCoy operations chief for RTC. "RTC and this team will make it so that we can sustain this operation forever if we had to. We are creating processes for longevity so that anyone who comes after us could pick up where we left off."

RTC continues to protect the welfare of its recruits and staff and works closely with medical experts to mitigate the transmission of the coronavirus.

"We train everyone in basic hygiene like handwashing, ensuring we train and enforce proper mask wear and social distancing. Our sanitation protocols are above recommended standards and our entire operation is designed to minimize contact," said Barnes. "We also have a wonderful medical team onsite that has proven time and time again to find a way. They have helped us develop our barracks layouts, marching formations, and how we balance the mission with training. The last benefit is having the capacity for our own isolation and quarantine barracks in case anyone does receive a positive test result."

Boot camp is approximately eight weeks and all enlistees into the U.S. Navy begin their careers at the command. Training includes physical fitness, seamanship, firearms, firefighting and shipboard damage control along with lessons in Navy heritage and core values, teamwork and discipline. More than 40,000 recruits train annually at RTC and begin their Navy careers. 🇺🇸

Sailor's Quick Reaction

Story by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Meranda Keller, Navy Talent Acquisition Group Golden Gate

SAN FRANCISCO - In a world filled with uncertainty and social distancing, many avoid close contact with others as a means to save lives. However, sometimes saving a life requires you to abandon the six-foot rule, and let your instincts kick in.

Navy Career Counselor 1st Class Parris Phelps returned to work earlier in the week after being at home for over a month for California's "stay at home order." Driving into work, Phelps was on a work call on speakerphone with Personnel Specialist 1st Class Tocara Clements when he approached an accident.

"Phelps interrupted the conversation abruptly," said Clements. "He said, 'Oh my God, the car in front of me just caught fire, they are on fire, I will call you back!'"

When Phelps approached the scene, he could see a small tree down in the road, but the smoke had grabbed his attention. Getting closer, he saw orange flames, and jumped out of his vehicle.

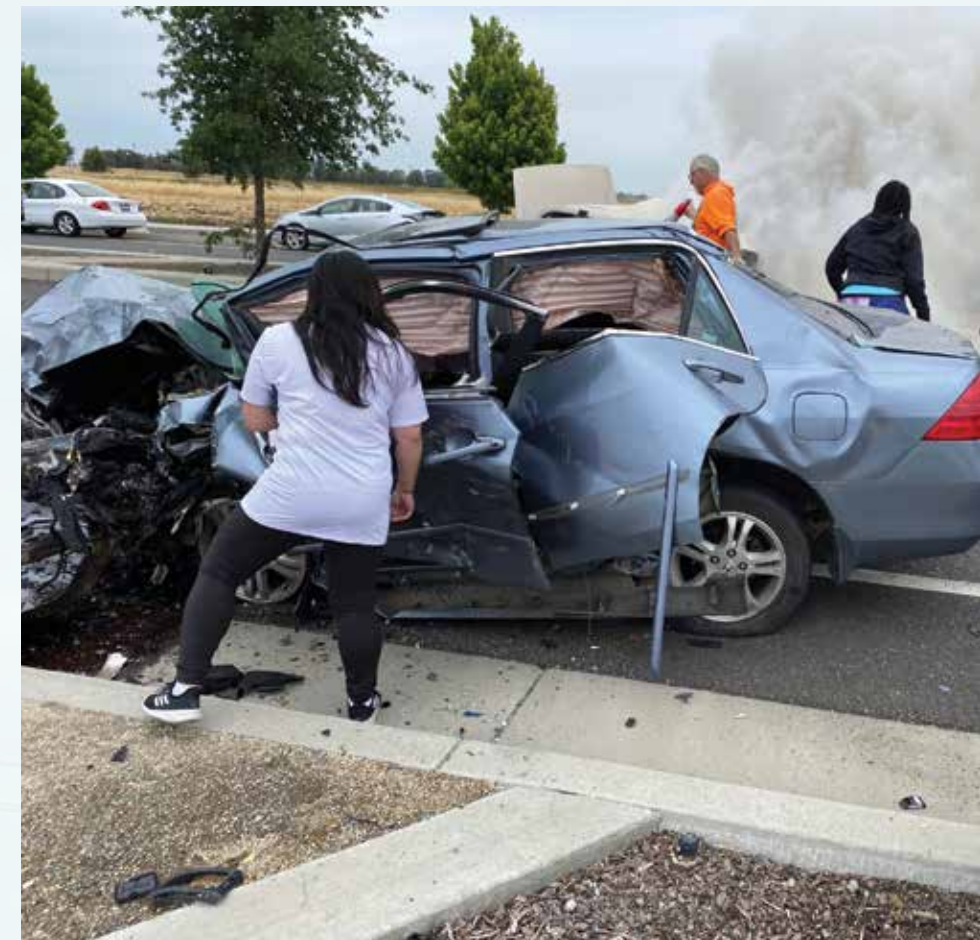
"I think instincts kicked in," said Phelps. "There's no time to think, other than of these people who need help."

Four to five others had gotten out to help as well, but no one had seen how the accident occurred. Surveying the scene, Phelps noticed two vehicles were involved with massive damage to their front ends.

Phelps and others rushed to the flaming vehicle to find an incapacitated driver. They attempted to pry open the severely damaged door. With no luck, they began to run around asking for fire extinguishers from others on the scene.

Phelps said the second driver was delirious, asking where he was and asking for help out of his vehicle. Phelps had to tell the driver he was not able to get him out, but that he called for support and it would be there soon. Phelps was not able to move him due to his injuries and did his best to keep him calm.

Six to eight fire extinguishers were collected from vehicles on scene, giving



▲ (Photo by Navy Career Counselor 1st Class Parris Phelps)

Phelps and others the ability to keep the flames at bay until the fire department showed up.

Once the fire department arrived, they asked Phelps and the others to stand back as they took over. It was determined that the driver of the first vehicle was deceased, and the firefighters asked Phelps and others to hold back as they extracted the second driver.

"I realize it's a big deal to go out and help someone in need," said Phelps. "This was such a humbling experience and nice to see people are still willing to help complete strangers out there, especially during these times."

Phelps joined the Navy in 2006 as an operations specialist. Phelps comes from a family with a long tradition of military service. His grandfather retired from the Navy, his father served 21 years in the Marines, and his stepmother did 24 years in the Marines as well. Phelps joined the Navy to travel the world and earn money for school. He is currently assigned to Navy Talent Accusation Group Golden Gate, where he changed his rate to Navy Counselor.

He said he wanted to change lives and have a real impact on the future of the Navy. He and those other brave volunteers did just that. 🇺🇸

NRC Meets Shipping Goal in FY20

Story by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Zachary S. Eshleman, Navy Recruiting Command



◀ Recruits march in formation at Recruit Training Command. More than 35,000 recruits train annually at the Navy's only boot camp. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Apprentice Karra Brown)

MILLINGTON, Tenn. – In fiscal year 2020 Navy Recruiters across the Nation were faced with many challenges, such as learning how to prospect during a pandemic. However, they overcame these obstacles and met Navy Recruiting Command's (NRC) active duty and reserve shipping goals.

"We actually over-shipped this year," said Cmdr. Thomas McKeon II, the operations officer for NRC. "We exceeded our accession goal for this year which is pretty amazing given the circumstances, and as far as individual jobs, we are over 99% for the vast majority of ratings."

This was in part because for years prior to the start of the coronavirus pandemic, NRC was already changing how it recruited, modernizing technologies and focusing primarily on digital prospecting.

"A large part of the Navy's success was because we had already started down

the pathway of trying to get into the online realm," McKeon said. "A fundamental part of the transformation we've been doing has been creating whole e-talent divisions for that purpose."

Since 2016, the Navy has steadily changed each of its 26 Navy Recruiting Districts, rebranding them as Navy Talent Acquisition Groups (NTAGs). This change not only creates the e-talent divisions that have been pivotal during the pandemic, it also assigns recruiters to specific positions that leverage their individual strengths, instead of being required to conduct all recruiter functions as they had under the legacy model.

Now, with recruiters focused exclusively on either sales, assessing or onboarding, they can adjust how they operate, to allow for more creativity and flexibility in how they reach the public and connect with prospects.

All 26 districts had originally been

scheduled to transform to this model by 2023. However, Commander, Navy Recruiting Command, Rear Adm. Dennis Velez, accelerated that timeline, in part due to the NTAGs success in the current environment. The remaining districts will all become NTAGs by the end of calendar year 2020.

"For the most part, we already had the processes in place that we needed before the pandemic," said Neil Higgins, the Region Central transformation officer. "So speeding it up was no problem. We had our director of field operations and chief recruiter going to these districts, and part of their purpose was to provide that e-talent and virtual recruiting training to these transforming districts."

He also said that having the years of lessons learned as they have been creating NTAGs helped once they accelerated the schedule because they knew exactly what

to do and what mistakes to avoid.

With these systems in place, the recruiting enterprise was set up to handle the shift to virtual prospecting during the pandemic. However, Velez made it clear that the Navy's success ultimately came down to the individual recruiters in the field. Their creativity and ingenuity was what was necessary to put people in the Navy during this pandemic.

"We are the only service that made mission this year; the recruiters should be proud," said Velez. "This would not have been possible without their tireless efforts over the past year."

The first line of the mission of NRC is to "leverage an inspirational culture to inform, attract, influence and hire the highest quality candidates from America's diverse talent pool." That did not change with the arrival of the pandemic, and NRC rose to the challenge. 🦋





▲ Twin sisters, Jaime and Caity Babineaux pose for a graduation photo at Navy Recruiting Station Hope Mills. (Photo by Gregory White)

HOPE MILLS, N.C. – So many good things come in pairs. As great as it was to have one Babineaux sister join the Navy, as luck would have it, the Navy got a pair. Twins Caity and Jaime Babineaux joined the Navy recently out of Navy Recruiting Station (NRS) Hope Mills.

Caity and Jaime, natives of Fayetteville, North Carolina, are identical twin sisters and graduates of Jack Britt High School. Although they took the oath in late March, they have been in the Delayed Entry Program at NRS Hope Mills waiting to ship to Recruit Training Command for boot camp in July.

It's no surprise to anyone that they both chose this path.

"We've always done everything together," said Jaime. "There is no doing anything without her. If I'm going out, she's coming with me. It's like being with your best friend ALL the time. You develop their quirks, tastes, and pet peeves because you're always with them."

"And we're with each other 24/7," said Caity. "We like the same stuff. We like watching the same shows, playing the same games, we like the same food. We'll literally sometimes be in two different rooms ..."

"LISTENING TO THE SAME SONG!" the twins simultaneously exclaimed and followed up with giggles.

Despite their similarities the twins do each have some traits of their own. For instance they have different motivations for joining the Navy.

Caity said she's always known that she wants to live a debt free life.

"I knew the military was a good avenue for that," she said. "I also knew I wanted to travel and see the world, so once I started really

Two Heads Are Better Than One

Story and photo by Gregory White, NRD Raleigh Public Affairs

entertaining the idea of serving, I ended up here talking to the Navy (recruiters)."

Jaime's reasoning was a little different.

"The Navy was definitely not the first thing I thought I'd be doing after high school," said Jaime. "But it's not like the military hasn't been a part of our lives. My father and my stepfather both have served. But I think what really convinced me is that our neighbor had signed up and was telling us about all the good benefits that come along with serving in the Navy – things like, travel, job security, medical, and education. With all the benefits I just thought, 'yeah...why not? It's easy to join and it's rewarding so why not join?'"

Their stepfather, Kevin Beekman, had served an enlistment in the Army. Thus, he said he fully supports the twins' decision.

"When the girls were looking at colleges and seeming ambivalent about that, I helped them look at different programs," said Beekman. "But they didn't really know what to choose. So when they showed interest in joining the Navy, I advocated for that decision."

Both girls are looking extremely forward to a new life in America's Navy. Caity is looking forward to being financially set and Jaime is looking forward to traveling abroad.

Despite their different motivations for joining, they both ended up choosing the same career path, completely by accident – or twin intuition.

"Actually, we both signed up for the job of Aviation Boatswain's Mate," said Jaime. "We each were talking to separate people and just happened to pick the same job without even knowing it and without ever having talked about it. We met up afterward and I was like 'What did you get?'" When Caity replied, 'ABH' I was like 'OH MY GOD. I picked the same!'"

That's not unusual for the twins who agreed that without even coordinating, they generally operate on the same wavelength. And now both look forward to operating on the same waves. 🌊

Eye on the Field



▲ MARIETTA, Ga. (August 26, 2020) Capt. James Minta prepares a group of students for a virtual presentation by Navy Recruiting Command's Lt. Cdr. Dominique Jackson. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Zachary S. Eshleman)

◀ FORT MCCOY, Wis. (Aug. 25, 2020) Recruits walk to their barracks after arriving on board Fort McCoy, a U.S. Army training center in western Wisconsin. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Nikita Custer)

Eye on the Fleet



◀ RED SEA (July 25, 2020) Boatswain's Mate Seaman Abraham Moore signals for an MH-60S Sea Hawk helicopter, attached to the "Dusty Dogs" of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 7, to take off from the flight deck aboard the guided-missile cruiser USS Vella Gulf (CG 72). (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Andrew Waters)



▶ SAN DIEGO (July 14, 2020) Port of San Diego Harbor Police Department boats combat a fire aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Bonhomme Richard (LHD 6) at Naval Base San Diego. On the morning of July 12, a fire was called away aboard the ship while it was moored pier side at Naval Base San Diego. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Jessica Paulauskas)

Accelerated NRC Transformation: All Engines Ahead Full

Story by Creative Writer Jordan Smith,
Navy Recruiting Command Public Affairs Office

Navy Recruiting Command (NRC) has accelerated the transformation of its Navy Recruiting Districts (NRDs) into Navy Talent Acquisition Groups (NTAGs).

In light of the recent pandemic, Rear Adm. Dennis Velez, Commander, NRC, challenged the Navy recruiting enterprise to accelerate the transformation process in order to provide better service to the recruits, optimize available technologies, create expertise that allows for a single focus on the elements of recruiting and set the organization on a single operating model by the end of 2020 – far ahead of the original schedule of 2023.

“The coronavirus pandemic highlighted the benefits that our upgraded technologies, organizational structures, and etalent teams can offer to Navy recruiting,” said Velez. “We are on a solid path with transforming our enterprise. After seeing how successful our transformed NTAGs were at the beginning of the pandemic, I determined that accelerating the transformation throughout all Navy recruiting by the year’s end is the right answer.”

The technological upgrades offered through transformation are helping Recruiters become more efficient, and enhancing the experiences of applicants.

“We have got to provide a better customer experience for applicants; speeding up transformation will allow that to happen,” said Jennifer Kelly, NRC division director of N94, which is the department responsible for leads generation and distribution. “Recruiters benefit by having a modern IT solution via Salesforce, which is used by all of the top contenders in customer service to manage their customers. Transitioning us into a fully submersed system is key, especially in a COVID-19 world.

Traditionally, our systems lagged quite a bit, and it could take up to a week

to contact an applicant from the time that they gave us their information. The beauty of Salesforce is that it runs in real time, so when an applicant gives us their information, it is immediately available to the recruiters.”

Utilizing up-to-date technology and social media has been integral to the success of NRC’s recruiting efforts, especially during COVID-19, and the etalent teams have played a pivotal role in this.

“None of us could foresee COVID-19 and what was going to happen, but what if none of the transformation teams had developed an etalent group and division within their commands?” asked Chief Navy Counselor Martha Noe, eTalent Central DLCPO for Region West. “What if the position of social media prospecting and brand development never came into effect prior to COVID? The e-talent team really helps get the Navy image out there.”

Transformation is not only modernizing Navy recruiting’s technologies and platforms, but is maximizing the unique talents of each recruiter by matching them with the recruiting pillar (sales and sourcing, assessing, onboarding, or etalent) that best suits their talents.

“Accelerating transformation allows us to standardize processes across the enterprise and realize the benefits of functional specialization much sooner,” said Cmdr. Patrick Copeland, Deputy Commodore of Region Central. “In legacy recruiting, a recruiter was required to be good at every function including prospecting, sales, administration, and management. If a legacy recruiter struggled throughout any of the process, they would ultimately struggle to achieve their assigned goals and be considered unsuccessful. Functional specialization allows a Sailor to become a Subject Matter Expert in

the area that is best suited for them. We put the right person in the right job and they become efficient throughout the whole recruiting process.”

Overall, the NTAG model is proving to improve work-life balance for Navy recruiters while gaining a more consistent mission outcome.

“NRC Transformation will provide the recruiter the best quality of life in order to meet increased mission requirements,” said Neil Higgins, NRC transformation officer.

“The feedback we are getting from the field is that NRDs who have transformed are especially enjoying the quality of life.” Instead of working

so many hours, they’re able to manage their time accordingly with production rates moving in Copeland added that the expected outcomes from transformation not only affects quality of life, but also an increase in Local Effective Accession Delivery System conversion, an increase in the quality of contracts, an increase in Military Entrance Processing Station conversion, an increase in Sailor advancement at Recruit Training Command (RTC), and a potential decrease in Delayed Entry Program and RTC attrition. 🐦

Navy Recruiting Command Establishes Region Central

Story by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Zachary S. Eshleman

MILLINGTON, Tenn. - Navy Recruiting Command (NRC) formally established Region Central Command in a ceremony Oct. 1. This new command is a byproduct of the transformation that is fundamentally changing the recruiting command structure and business model.

"When transformation first started, the idea was to flatten NRC and downsize," said Rear Adm. Dennis Velez, Commander, Navy Recruiting Command. "It was quickly realized that in order to be as efficient as possible, and to help our commanding officers we needed to not only maintain Region West and Region East, but to move billets around in order to establish Region Central as well. This

vision is being realized today."

During the initial phase of transformation, NRC quickly discovered that Navy Recruiting Districts (NRDs) and Navy Recruiting Talent Acquisition Groups (NTAGs) needed to report to an intermediate regional command, so they were aligned under two Recruiting regions, East and West, each overseeing 13 districts. However, as the recruiting enterprise continued to transform, NRC determined that a third recruiting region was essential to maximizing the mission impact of recruiting personnel.

"Standing up a third region means fewer NRDs and NTAGs per region, which translates to more time to mentor

and coach," said Velez, "More time to help with pay and personnel issues, a greater ability to address challenges quicker and in more detail, more time for them to gauge the pulse of our people and relay that information to me, more insight into how our programs and policies are working at the field level, more time for questions and concerns. Now more than ever, continuation of care is a priority."

Region Central is now responsible for more than one-third of the Navy's annual recruiting goal, and it will be composed of nine NTAGs, overseeing 350 recruiting stations in 17 states and covering 850,000 square miles. This region will have operational and administrative command over NTAGs Great Lakes, Heartland, Ohio River Valley, Mid-America, Red River, Nashville, Atlanta, New Orleans and Houston.

The regional commands will now each have smaller areas of operation, and therefore the leadership will be able to adapt their specific processes to better

suit their specific environments. The creation of Region Central represents just another way NRC is evolving to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow.

"These are truly challenging times for recruiting," said Capt. Robert "Butch" Smith, Commodore for Navy Recruiting Region Central. "We are learning and adapting to recruiting in a pandemic. But what a great mission we have! We are hiring our Navy's leaders of tomorrow. We are giving these young men and women the opportunity to change their lives and be a part of something larger than themselves...to serve their country as a Sailor in the United States Navy."

Region Central Command is located at Navy Recruiting Command headquarters at Naval Support Activity Mid-South, along with both Regions East and West. Eighteen military and civilian personnel were redistributed from within the Navy Recruiting enterprise to be assigned to Region Central, so no additional manpower or facility costs were incurred in the creation of this command. 🇺🇸

▼ Commander, Navy Recruiting Command, Rear Admiral Dennis Velez, is the presiding officer over the ceremony as Captain Robert Smith takes charge as Region Central Commodore. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Cody Anderson)



► Navy Recruiting Command held a ribbon cutting ceremony to commemorate the establishment of Navy Recruiting Command, Region Central. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Cody Anderson)





U.S. NAVY RESERVE

Navy Reserve Raises the Bar in Response to COVID-19

Story by Jordan Smith, Navy Recruiting Command Public Affairs Office



▲ Information System Technician 1st Class Shannon Manuel at the warehouse printing shipping labels for the packages that will get shipped out to the Navy Recruiting Stations. (Photo by Crisalyn Pond)

MILLINGTON, Tenn. (NNS) – As a wife and mother of two, Information System Technician 1st Class Shannon Manuel, an 18-year Navy Veteran, knew that keeping her family safe during the novel coronavirus pandemic was a priority. As a Navy Reservist, currently assigned to Navy Recruiting Command's (NRC) Reserve Support Unit, she felt a responsibility to keep her fellow citizens safe as well. So she did what many Reserve

Sailors across the nation have done during this crucial time, she put on her uniform and went to work.

Since its inception in 1915, the U.S. Navy Reserve has provided invaluable service and support to the United States and its partners, notably during times of crisis. Among their many contributions to our nation, Navy Reservists hunted enemy U-boats during World War I; they defended our citizens after the attack on Pearl Harbor; and they mobilized after the September 11 attacks to provide combat operations support for the Global War on Terror. So when the coronavirus pandemic threatened our country earlier this year, Navy Reservists like Manuel were once again ready to provide crucial support.

Manuel is among 55 Navy Reservists assigned to NRC who were mobilized to keep the Navy's accessions pipeline open and operational while much of the world went into lockdown. Protecting the accessions pipeline is one of the most essential functions in the Navy, so recruiters had to continue bringing qualified recruits into the service. The accessions pipeline controls personnel flow, which includes new Sailor production. However, with recruiters across the nation having to telework due to childcare difficulties, health concerns, or high-risk family members, the need for support was critical, and NRC's Reserve Component was ready. Without the Reserve effort, the flow of personnel could have stalled.

"Our fully integrated, trained, and available Navy Reserve team is vital to fulfilling the operational capacity and strategic depth needed by NRC to inform, attract, influence and hire the highest quality candidates from America's diverse talent pool into the Navy the nation needs," said Rear Adm. Robert Nowakowski, Deputy Commander of Naval Education & Training Command and NRC. "Our highly-skilled, force-multiplying, citizen

Sailors are continuously and collectively enabling Recruiting Nation to transform and support operations to maintain a competitive advantage over our adversaries in order to win the high-end fight."

NRC's 55 Reserve billets are split up across five units: Millington, Jacksonville, Minneapolis, Houston and San Diego.

For Capt. Kathleen Allen, commanding officer, Navy Reserve, NRC in Millington, Tennessee, the 770 hours of service her team provides would typically be spent supporting recruiting events and activities in the field. However, due to COVID-19, planned events and activities were quickly cancelled, and the focus shifted to staff support.

Since mid-March, Sailors like Manuel have been on orders, racking up hundreds of hours of direct support to NRC's mission, said Allen.

"Manuel's support of identifying, tracking, packing, and shipping safety gear and promotional items to the Navy Recruiting Districts (NRDs)/Navy Talent Acquisition Groups (NTAGs) has been a tremendous help to the command," said Allen. "I can't say enough about how impressed I am with the Reserve team. In a time of restricted travel, we have been able to adapt and overcome, providing quality support for the command to execute its mission."

Despite travel and contact limitations due to the pandemic, the Reserve team was able to overcome them in a big way by providing direct support to Military Entrance Processing Stations (MEPS) across the nation to keep the accessions pipeline moving – with some Reservists helping the commands administer enlistment oaths. In all, Allen's team completed 3,041 support days for the fiscal year, with 1,141 days to MEPS and 1,900 to CNRC commands and events – coordinating close to four times the expected amount of support days.

Cmdr. Charles Knight, a husband and father of three, who works as a senior vice president with a business-to-government contractor, knew the Navy needed him to step away from his civilian life, and into his role as the Officer in Charge of Navy Reserve, NRD detachment Jacksonville.

Knight's unit comes equipped with only 112 annual training days to support Navy Recruiting Command each fiscal year, but Knight knew more was needed.

"When the call for Reserve staff support demand signals were sent to our active component shipmates, they answered swiftly," said Knight. "This July alone we coordinated and executed 222 days of support to NRC, including the NTAGs, NRDs, and MEPS. And we currently have 614 more days scheduled for the next two months."

The support Knight and his unit provided was not only vast, but varied as well. From lending operational assistance to phone conferences and the Virtual Career Fair to supporting MEPS Jacksonville by fulfilling roles

as swearing-in officers and Oath of Enlistment contract signers for military entrance applicants, Knight's team did it all.

They were vital in keeping current operations running smoothly by performing tasks like general admin and training via telework, but the team also prepared for future events. One instance of this being the performance of an organizational inspection for MEPS Jacksonville to assist in preparing for Military Entrance Processing Command Inspector General inspection scheduled for 2021.

Some of the support from Knight's team fixed current issues for those they were assisting as well as prevented new issues, such as when support was provided to NRC N1 – the department that heads workforce matters pertaining to civilian, military, and contractor personnel – by meticulously comparing data and conducting admin screenings to more than 3000 data entries, which resulted in identifying more than 250 discrepancies.

Regardless of the type of support they gave, the impact was always profound.

By assigning a Reservist to do additional essential duties, even duties as simple as taking the temperature of staff members upon entry into the building, active duty staff members at the command were free to do their regular jobs, said Knight.

"I think one of the things the Navy has instilled in us is to look for the solutions," said Knight. "Identifying the problem seems to always be easy for everyone to do, but I think we found a great solution here. Our support facilitated uninterrupted services during a time of major interruptions."

"The Reserve team's outstanding effort has been integral to the success of the recruiting enterprise," said Rear Adm. Dennis Velez, Commander, Navy Recruiting Command. "Their dedication to the Navy's mission, especially in the midst of a pandemic, is emblematic of what it means to be a Sailor in the U.S. Navy."

▼ YN1 Stephens (seated) and OS1 Butth (standing) processing applicants for shipping out to basic training at MEPS Jacksonville. (Courtesy photo)



NRS Hope Mills Recognizes Its High School Graduates Before They Head To Boot Camp

Story and photo by Gregory White, Navy Recruiting Command

▼ Operations Specialist 1st Class Sade Robinson recognizes future Sailor Ida Shepherd, a 2020 high school graduate, at Navy Recruiting Station (NRS) Hope Mills. NRS Hope Mills hosted a small ceremony to honor its graduating seniors who would be heading to boot camp this summer. (Courtesy photo)

HOPE MILLS, N.C. – It is customary for recruiters to attend the graduation ceremonies of the seniors who have chosen to make the Navy a career. This year, due to COVID-19, many schools are postponing ceremonies, or skipping them all together, and that just didn't sit right with Navy Recruiting Station Hope Mills. So recruiters there decided to host its own small ceremony for its graduating future Sailors.

All seniors due to ship out to Recruit Training Command prior to their respective schools' graduation ceremonies were invited to be honored at the recruiting station.

Operations Specialist 1st Class Sade Robinson didn't want seniors that were going to have to miss their graduations to feel like they were slighted on their way out the door. So this was a way she could honor them, and their choice to honor the country.

Ida Shepherd, one of the graduates said she is extremely grateful for Robinson and that, in fact, Robinson is the reason she chose to join the Navy.

"She is my recruiter," said Shepherd. "I connected with her. When she came to my school she politely introduced herself. She was organized. She had all her information in a power point presentation. Other recruiters from other branches just came and talked. They didn't show us anything about their branches really. But she was really more polished and I feel like she really cared about informing us and listening to us. She let us ask questions and spent time talking to us and engaging us. She also came to the school more often than some of the others. I just felt like she actually cared."

Shepherd also said It made her feel good to take part in the NRS Hope Mills graduation ceremony.

"Our senior year we didn't really get the full experience at school," said Shepherd. "So it's really nice to know that they actually care about honoring us here and giving us a little taste of a graduation ceremony with pictures and awards."

Robinson said it didn't make sense to her not to do something. She described putting herself in the shoes of the future Sailors and feeling empathetic toward them.

"What if it was me?," said Robinson. "What if I didn't get to have my graduation, how would that make me feel? I had to do something."

Robinson is pleased to know Shepherd thinks so highly of her.

"It makes me happy to know that I'm doing something," said Robinson. "My whole goal, and the reason I became a recruiter, is because I want to change peoples' lives. The fact that they see something positive in me means they see something positive about the Navy and their decision to join."

The ceremony at NRS Hope Mills consisted of an award presentation for each senior as well as portraits in their caps and gowns.



Couple Joins America's Navy On Wedding Anniversary

Story and photo by Burrell Parmer, Navy Recruiting District San Antonio Public Affairs

JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO FORT SAM HOUSTON, Texas – For many married couples, celebrating an anniversary is spent having dinner at a fine restaurant, taking a luxurious vacation, or just spending time at home curled up watching a love story on television. For Hans and Haley Wegener, they shared their special day at the Military Entrance Processing Station in San Antonio to join America's Navy.

Hans, of Sedro-Woolley, Washington, and Haley, of Odessa, Texas, have been married for four years and currently reside in Odessa.

Both will serve in the advanced electronics computer field.

"I joined the Navy so I can be able to better myself for my family and future career," said Hans, a warehouse assistant manager. "I expect to learn structure and discipline and use that to benefit my career and work ethic."

Haley said she is joining the Navy to further her education and challenge herself while being able to serve her amazing country in the process.

"I expect to learn new skill sets that I wouldn't get the opportunity to learn in the oil fields back home," said Haley, a repair technician who repairs fall safety devices for oil rigs and warehouses. "The Navy is beneficial to me because my husband and I will be able to see the world outside of the oil patch that is the Permian Basin."

The Wegener's, both 2015 graduates of Permian High School in Odessa, are scheduled to leave for boot camp in December and hope they can ship on the same day.

"Although it's sad that we will be apart for a while, I think my wife is brave for joining with me," said Hans. "I am so proud that she wanted to take this step to benefit both of our futures."

For Haley, shipping to boot camp will be the longest amount of time spent away from her husband.

"Although I will hate having to be apart for a while, I feel like we will be able to make it through this and come out of this strong as ever," said Haley. "I know that the outcome of this decision will positively impact our future."



Continuing the EO Discussion: Going Beyond Command Climate Surveys

Story and photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Chris Williamson

ST. LOUIS – Every year, commands throughout the Navy send out a confidential survey to all hands known as the Defense Equal Opportunity Climate Survey (DEOCS) to gauge and focus on issues of organizational effectiveness, equal opportunity and sexual assault response and prevention.

Military and civilian personnel assigned to Navy Talent Acquisition Group (NTAG) Mid America recently completed this survey and received the results from the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI). NTAG Mid America's commanding officer, Cmdr. Bradley Whittington, took those findings and conducted virtual debriefings over a two-day period.

Although NTAG Mid America performed better than the Navy average in most categories, Whittington used his command's DEOCS survey as a starting point for solutions to issues within the command.

"Even though our command climate is progressively getting better over the years, we can still do better," said Whittington. "I owe it to my people to make that happen."

During the debriefs, Whittington went over the various highs and lows of the survey and asked each group, separated by pay grade, several questions about how they felt on a particular category or comment. Responses varied by peer group, both positive and negative, but Whittington feels that each group was able to find solutions and work together as a team.

"It is essential to talk about issues, both within and outside the lifelines of the command, amongst one another as a family," said Whittington. "Our team will only continue to succeed if we trust one another. In turn, the local population will trust our team, and the Navy, when they see us embracing the fact that ours is a fair and equitable organization working to be free of any harmful or discriminatory practices or perceptions thereof."

However, the discussions will not end

there for NTAG Mid America. Even though the command climate survey and debriefs are complete, the need to continue to discuss and oust iniquities such as racism and sexual assault is something that Whittington feels should happen year-round.

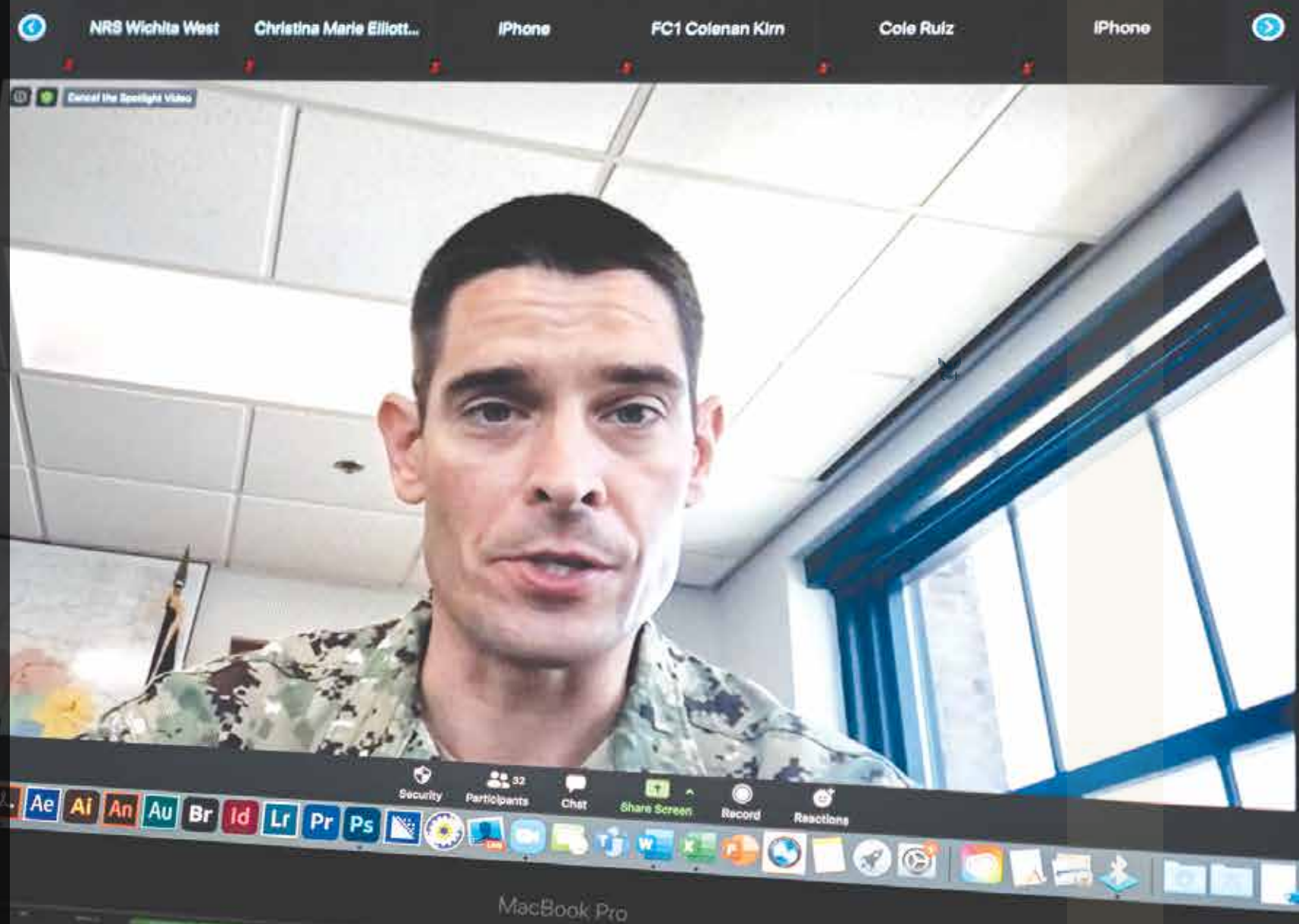
"I told my staff to expect more periodic focus group discussions and more frequent reminders on anti-discrimination policies and procedures," said Whittington. "I also plan on conducting more frequent all-hands calls to spread the message that everyone will be treated fairly and with respect."

Although no specific violations of equal opportunity were noted on the DEOCS survey within NTAG Mid America, Whittington explained that it is always the right time to talk about those issues and to work towards ridding them for good. He also made it clear that those who violate the policies prohibiting discrimination and sexual assault will be held accountable and disciplined to the full extent of the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

"Racism and sexual assault are unacceptable and will not be tolerated here or anywhere within the Navy," said Whittington. "I expect everyone who sees or hears anything racist or sexual in nature to speak up and intervene."

In order to help facilitate the roundtable discussions, Whittington has tasked NTAG Mid America's equal opportunity manager, Chief Navy Counselor Donald Craig, with putting together a team to conduct command conversations about race and equality and how it affects the command and Navy. These members will be made up from NTAG Mid America's Command Resilience Team (CRT).

"This is a talk that needs to happen at all levels," said Craig. "The plan is to make it as casual and relaxed as possible yet ask the tough questions that need to be asked in order to get real answers and real solutions."



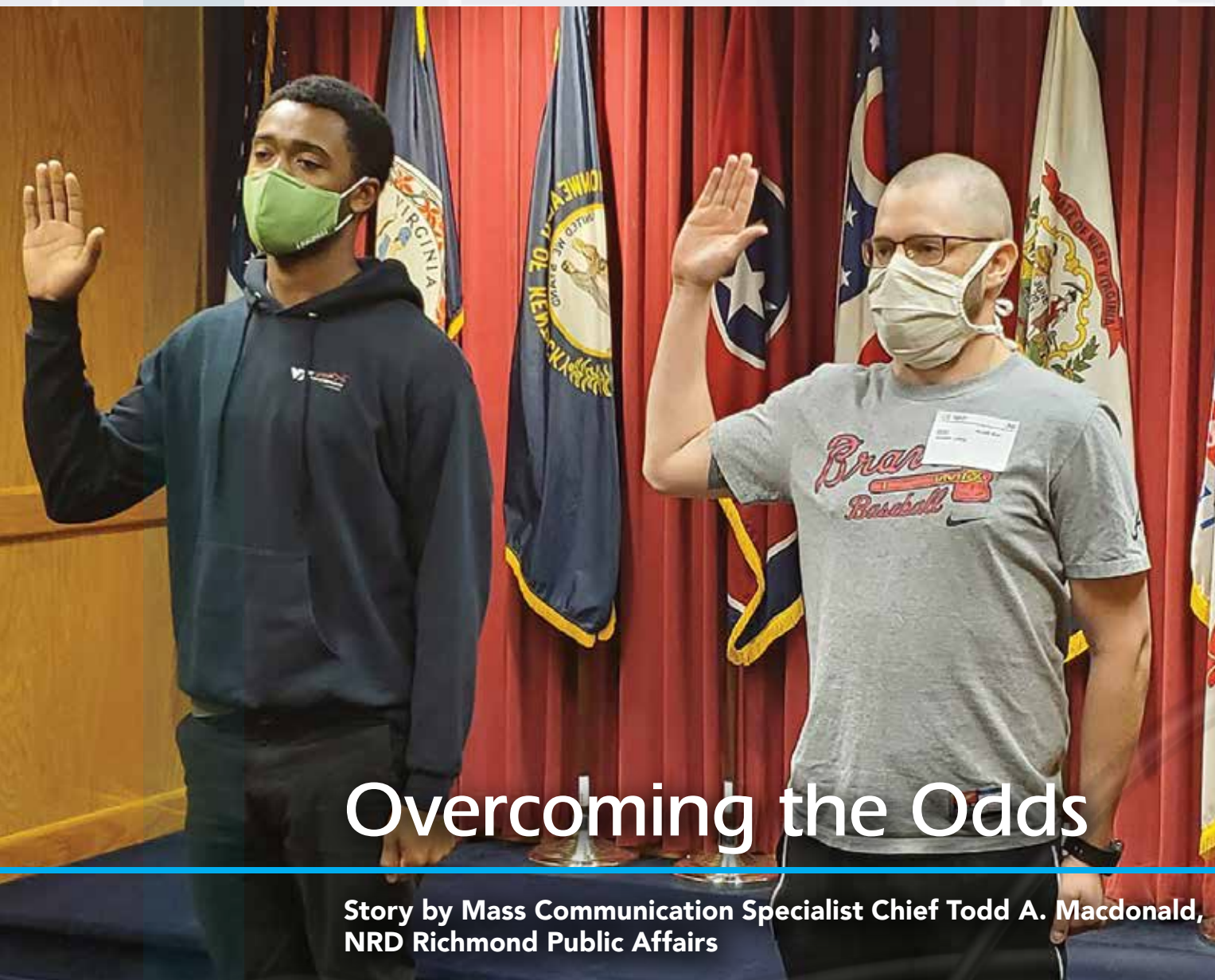
▲ Cmdr. Bradley Whittington, commanding officer of Navy Talent Acquisition Group (NTAG) Mid America, conducts a virtual Defense Equal Opportunity Climate Survey (DEOCS) debrief, July 9, 2020. The purpose of the debrief, which was held with various peer groups, was to inform personnel about issues, receive feedback and come up with solutions. NTAG Mid America, part of Navy Recruiting Command, recruits the next generation of Navy Sailors throughout areas encompassing Missouri, Kansas, central and southern Illinois, and a portion of Kentucky. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Chris Williamson)

Similar to the aforementioned team, the U.S. Navy has implemented Task Force (TF) One Navy, which will be used to identify barriers and corrective actions in order to eliminate inequalities between groups of people. According to Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday, TF One Navy will leverage outreach focus groups from both within and outside the Navy representing diversity of race, ethnicity, gender, age and rank to ensure a diversity of experience and perspectives. While the Navy has been committed to inclusion and diversity for many years,

current events have shined a light on the need for Navy personnel to do more and to do it more swiftly.

In keeping with the vision of Gilday and TF One Navy, Whittington's bottom line is this: continue to talk about good conduct, fairness and equality, and adhere to the Navy Core Values of honor, courage and commitment.

"It's my belief that everyone should be evaluated on their performance based solely on merit and never by any bias nor unfair practices," said Whittington. "I expect everyone to follow the Golden Rule and treat others as they would want to be treated." 🦅



Overcoming the Odds

Story by Mass Communication Specialist Chief Todd A. Macdonald,
NRD Richmond Public Affairs

▲ BECKLEY, WEST VIRGINIA (August 21, 2020) Future Sailor Zachary Bird (far right) raises his right hand, swearing his allegiance to the Navy, during an enlistment ceremony at the Military Entrance Processing Station. (Photo by Mineman 2nd Class Garrette Shoemaker)

RICHMOND, Va. - Even while playing baseball and riding his bike with friends in the small town of Spring, Virginia, Zachary Bird always knew he wanted to join the military. What he didn't know was that he would be diagnosed with Leukemia at the age of 12.

Leukemia is a type of cancer that affects the body's blood-forming tissues, including the bone marrow and the lymphatic system. The definition of the disease didn't mean much to Bird; not letting the disease define his life was what he focused on.

"I was a very active kid and I found out about it in the middle of summer baseball," said Bird. "The first thing I said was, 'Am I going to be able to play baseball?'"

Dealing with cancer is a long and daunting process with chemotherapy taking a lot out of a person. However, Bird said it was relatively simple for him.

"During the treatment I was always at a doctor's appointment or doing school work or trying to make friends in a hospital full of sick kids," he said. "This fast paced living kind of took my mind off of cancer and put it on just trying to have a normal childhood."

Due to his busy schedule and his positive attitude, Bird said he never had bad thoughts about getting sick or dying, nor did he ever give up. Instead, he focused on the simple things in life like making pizza with his new friends at the hospital or playing guitar hero with his step dad.

"I was 15 on my last chemo treatment," Bird said. "Soon after that I started to slowly work my way back into going to school and playing sports such as swim and soccer."

Due to the diagnosis, Bird had to miss a year and a half of school. Instead of

looking at the negative of not being able to be around his friends, Bird looked at the experience as a positive, enabling him to spend more time with his family.

"Being around my parents, doctors, and hospital staff, I spent a lot of time with adults - much more than I would have normally - so it caused me to mature and grow up a little faster," he said.

He was given the chance to speak in front of 4,000 people at Relay for Life, an organization that hosts walks and fun runs to raise money for cancer research. There he was able to talk to people about his story and experiences living with cancer.

As a member of the percussion section at Patrick Henry High School, one of Bird's dreams was to be able to be a part of the Virginia Tech Marching Band during a football game.

"As part of the Make-a-Wish Foundation, I was able to do just that," said Bird. "I not only marched with them on the field, but I sat in the stands and played with them throughout the whole game."

Another dream of Bird's was to join the military. His father was in the Air Force and his stepfather was in the Navy, so it was very much a part of his upbringing.

However, after his diagnosis, he figured the military wasn't an option for him. So after finishing high school, he jumped around from job to job. Tractor salesperson, the lumber department at Lowes, a gymnastics coach, phone sales representative, and then a chiropractic assistant.

"About a year before I enlisted I realized the military was a great opportunity to better my life, and it was actually an option," he said.

Bird said many things brought him to the decision of joining what he feels is the best branch in the military. However, there was one thing that stood out above all the rest, his need to give back to a country that has given him so much.

"I was able to get through what I did because of being in America and the opportunity to go to a wonderful hospital like St. Jude, with their amazing, caring and talented staff as well as state-of-the-art facilities," he said.

"I talked to recruiters from every branch of service and no matter what Navy recruiter I talked to; they were always professional and talked to me and not at me," he said. "They treated me like an equal and I just felt more comfortable with the Navy than I did with any other branch."

Bird is extremely excited with his job rating in the Navy as an aviation electronics technician.

"I will be working on the computer systems for the airplanes and helicopters," he said.

Bird said his recruiter, Navy Counselor 1st Class William Wade, guided him more than he could have asked for.

"From sitting down going through all my medical documents to explaining the culture of the Navy, NC1 Wade never gave up hope on me and that type of determination is something I will strive for," he said.

Bird said his family has always been supportive of everything he has done in his life, and although his mom was a bit apprehensive about him joining, she quickly came around.

"It wasn't working at Lowes, being a gymnastics coach, or a tractor salesman, so it was better than that," he said with a laugh. "The day I came home and told her I was enlisted, both her and my stepdad's faces lit up with smiles as bright as a Christmas tree."

Bird said even though he has had many jobs in his life, he plans to make the Navy a career.

"While I have done amazing things at my previous jobs, they could never compare to the experiences and opportunities that will be provided to me in the Navy," he said.

Though he knows it may sound corny, Bird said he hopes to gain knowledge from the Navy.

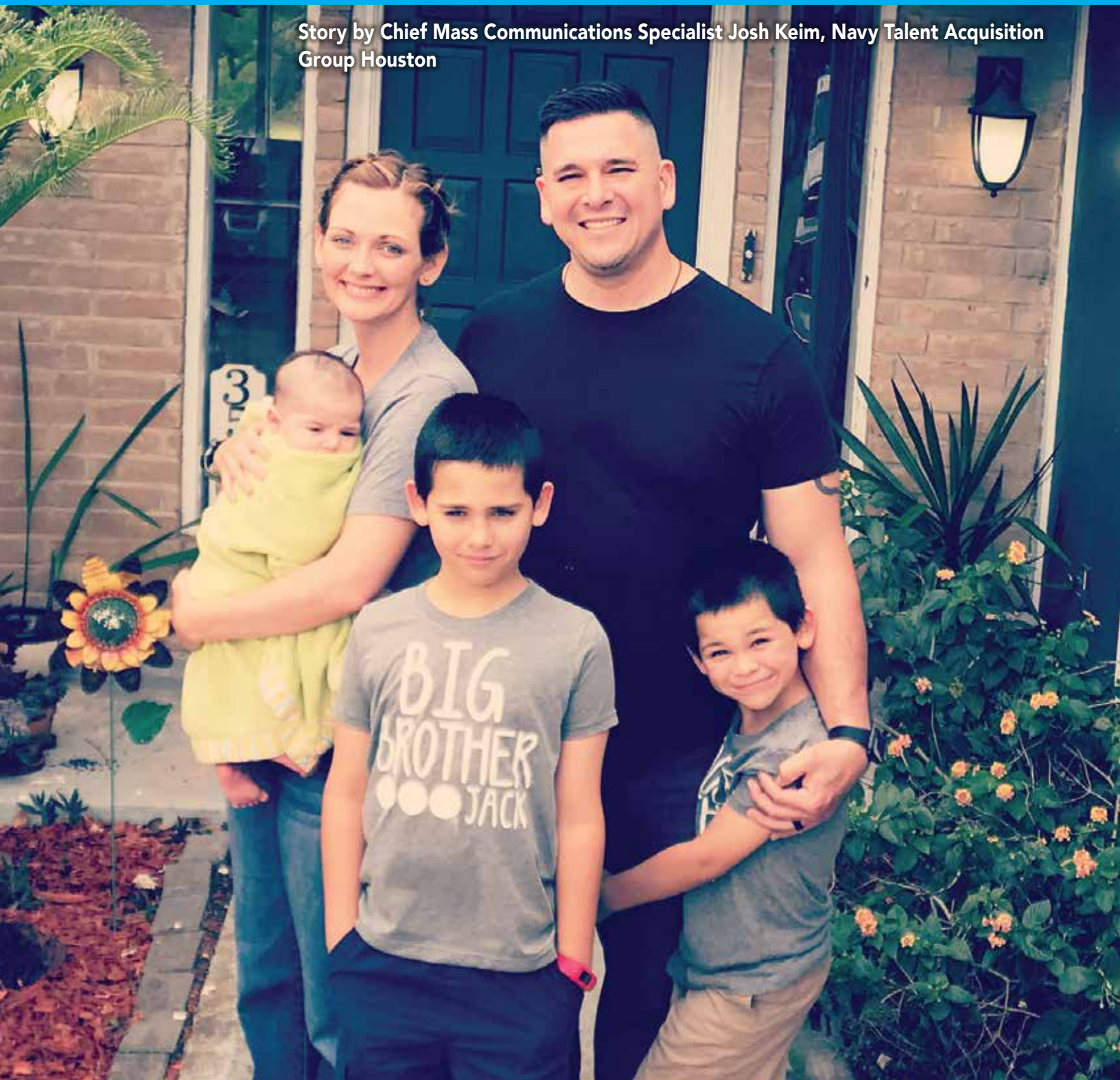
"I have always disliked being stagnant at jobs because there is no stimulation, no challenge," he said. "With the Navy, there is so much room for career development, an always changing environment, learning new things, and gaining new experiences." 🦅

▼ GLADE SPRING, VIRGINIA (September 13, 2008) Future Sailor Zachary Bird (right) sits on his bed with his sister Ashley after a fierce game of Guitar Hero during the initial stages of chemotherapy. (Courtesy Photo by Zachary Bird)



Husband And Wife Celebrate Dual Commissions

Story by Chief Mass Communications Specialist Josh Keim, Navy Talent Acquisition Group Houston



CORPUS CHRISTI, Tx. - The house was silent as he wandered through the hallway and into the kitchen. Colorful cookware, snacks and children's toys cluttered the countertops and kitchen table, illustrating the busy schedules and the kind of organized chaos symbolic of two young parents with school-aged children. Shoulders slumped, heavy from the demoralizing defeat he'd been handed, he gazed up at the collage of family photographs on the wall. Staring at the photographs of his wife and sons, he gasped for a moment of reprieve, but the disappointing news burst back into his mind shattering the morning silence. "I'm sorry," he must've remembered the recruiter saying. "You still don't meet the physical standards, but don't give up."

It was his second unsuccessful attempt to lose enough weight to compete for a commission in the U.S. Navy, and his program application was denied. But standing there in his kitchen, the collection of family portraits seemed to smile down on him, reminding him who he was fighting for.

"Okay," he declared, "I can do this."

Jose Garza, 40, grew up in Eagle Lake, Texas; a charming, humble town of 3,500 people nestled 60 miles west of Houston and known for a golf course, a small regional airport, and the state's largest private lake. His parents raised him to work hard, take care of the people around him, and take care of his health.

"You look at my dad, and he's the epitome of good health," Jose explained. "He's got bigger muscles than I do. He still walks several miles every day to get his cardio in, and he's 75 years old."

Jose's older brother was an X-ray technician, and his older sister was a nurse in an emergency room, so when he decided to enlist in the Navy in 1999, he knew a job in health care was the only assignment he wanted.

"I always had a dream of being a doctor or a nurse," Jose said. "I met with a recruiter and said I wanted to be a medic. The recruiter tried to get me to be a nuclear engineer, but I didn't want to be anything but a corpsman. I just love to help people."

As Jose embarked on his first few years in the Navy as a hospital corpsman stationed on the tropical paradise of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, he quickly collided with a difficult transition to life in the military.

"I was a pretty bad Sailor back in the day," he recalled. "I was young and dumb, got into a lot of trouble, and I even went to captain's mast twice. They were going to kick me out of the Navy."

As time pressed on, Jose's self-confidence grew frail and bleak, but a Jose

said it was a chief that helped him once again find his footing.

"Chief Jones knew I was a good kid, and he was the only person who vouched for me," said Jose. "Even I didn't think I could make it in the Navy, but Chief Jones taught me the basics, motivated me, taught me to enjoy what I do, and turned me around. If it wasn't for him, I wouldn't be here in the first place."

Jose credits good leadership and a positive role model for his early course correction, and vowed to pay that forward. Throughout his first two tours of duty, he seized opportunities to learn every procedure and every medicine and their dosages to ensure he'd be equipped to help people when called upon. During a deployment to Iraq in 2003 with the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit, Jose recounts a time when he and another corpsman raced to the scene to render aid to allied forces where a British convoy was ambushed.

"We couldn't save them all," he said with a solemn, steadfast tone.

He rushed toward the chaos, his training took over, and he did everything he could to carry his comrades to safety.

"It was heartbreaking, but we were able to save three of them."

Many years later, as he chronicled his tales of combat, another defining moment in his career as a corpsman flashed in his mind. It was a typical day at the firing range, and Jose was the on-duty corpsman required for live-fire training when suddenly someone screamed over the loudspeaker, "Cease fire!" One of the men who recently returned from overseas appeared to be in severe distress, exhibiting ominous and alarming conditions on the range. Jose heard his name called over the loudspeaker, hurried toward the commotion to assess the disruption, and he immediately thought, "What am I supposed to do?" He gripped the loudspeaker anyway and asked if he could approach.

"Hey buddy," he said calmly. "Are you going to shoot me?"

"No, doc," the man responded. "I like you."

"Okay, can I walk up to you?" asked Jose.

"Yeah," the man answered.

As the distressed man stood there planted, clenching his loaded rifle, Jose crept toward him until they were face-to-face.

"Look, think about what you're doing right now," Jose proposed, willingly placing his own safety at risk. "All I want to do is help you because right now you're in a lot of danger. You've got a loaded rifle and so does everybody else. Please, let me help you."

Reluctantly, the man handed his rifle to Jose who quickly unloaded it, and they both staggered across the arid range to the

◀ Ens. Jose E. Garza (top-right), his wife, Lt. Brittany Garza, and their three sons, (from left) Finn, Jack and Liam, stand in front of their home in Corpus Christi, Texas in May 2020. (Courtesy photo)

medical evacuation van to talk. For several hours, Jose comforted and supported his brother-in-arms, again, demonstrating his compassion and humanity for those who needed it most.

"It was all the yelling, shooting and screaming," Jose explained. "He had unresolved issues from Iraq, but he got the help he needed, and everybody was okay. He thanked me afterward when he realized how disastrous it could have been."

In 2005, Jose separated from the Navy, joined the police force for a brief period, and began attending nursing school. That's where he met Brittany, the woman of his dreams, who shared his vision and yearning to help people.

"It was love at first sight," Jose pronounced. "She was beautiful, smart, the whole package."

After graduating from his nursing program in 2007, Jose joined the Navy Reserve where he eventually promoted to hospital corpsman 1st class, and he and Brittany married two years later.

"Times were tough after that," said Jose. "I wanted to commission on active duty, but

my goal in life then was to push Brittany through school so that if anything happened to me, she'd be okay. We both wanted to go [to school together], but we decided to let her go first. She just kept graduating though," he said, laughing. "She finished her two-year degree as a nurse, then her four-year degree, then her master's degree."

To support Brittany's academics, Jose labored tirelessly balancing three jobs working seven days a week.

"I worked in the [emergency room] for two or three days, I worked for [former] president [George H.W.] Bush for two or three days, and I was doing home health on any other day off to make ends meet," Jose recalled.

By the time Brittany completed her master's degree, Jose was already in full swing studying to finish his bachelor's degree, they had two sons, and Jose applied for a commissioning program in the Navy. When his application was denied, Brittany decided she wanted to join the Navy, too.

"I've wanted to be a nurse since I was eight," she said. "I can help people, help my family, continue my education as far as I want, and I can do all those things for the men and women who served and are serving."

Brittany worked hard and earned a commission as a nurse practitioner. Then she and their young family shifted their focus toward Jose.

"I was out of the race until I lost weight," Jose confessed. "I had a couple breaks of service, and I just gained a bunch of weight. So, Brittany put me on a strict diet and fitness regimen. I tried the keto diet and, for several months, it was grueling workouts, self-discipline with food, and it was really tough. It's a whole lifestyle change."

Jose needed a nurse and trainer, and Brittany accepted the role without hesitation.

"I'm sure very few people like to be lectured about diet and exercise, especially from their spouse," she recounted. "He became more receptive, though, when he was spending two hours in the gym three times a week and not seeing the results he expected."

Jose devoted himself to his wife's painstaking regimen and shed 40 pounds in 16 weeks, but he still fell short of his goal. He understood what was at stake, though, and he was not going to let adversity thwart his ambition. He drew from the agony to fuel his motivation, and he pressed forward. Month by month, Jose toiled at multiple jobs, studied for classes, and trained his body with unwavering focus.

"We would get up in the morning, and Jose was either on his way to work, had just come in from a run, was talking to one of his reservists, or doing homework," said Brittany. "I'd take the kids to the bus stop or he'd take them to school. He didn't do much else

besides school, clinicals, reserves, and work. He figured out what he needed to do to keep in shape and was diligent about his diet."

"Life was full-time work and school for a long time," Jose said with a sigh. "I'd say there's a lack of time, but there isn't. I needed to get into a different mindset. You can always make time to exercise and eat better."

When he was ready and the time came to try again, Jose met with recruiters who presented new challenges and delays that consumed another six months of his life. Brittany was advancing in her career, and Jose needed a spark.

"I was finally in exceptional shape, but then it was one hurdle after another," Jose said.

Growing restless and dismayed from factors he couldn't control, Jose turned to the people he knew he could count on to get him past the finish line; the same people who helped Brittany through her recruiting process.

"Finally, I just ended up going to Mr. G in Houston," he said. "The same recruiter who got my wife into the Navy, and oh my god, it was like clockwork. It was weekly meetings, and he would call me instead of me reaching out to him. It was an awesome experience with Houston."

As soon as Jose began working with Robert Gauthier (Mr. G.), an officer processor at Navy Talent Acquisition Group (NTAG) Houston, and Chief Hospital Corpsman Jamie Banks, a



◀ Ensign Jose E. Garza (right) stands with his son Jack on his first day of school on August 28, 2017. (Courtesy photo)

medical officer recruiter at NTAG Houston, everything turned around and began to fall into place.

"Man, as soon as I met Chief Banks, too, she was incredible," Jose declared. "She was on [top of everything]. 'Bring me this; bring me that; this is what you have to do; this is why we're waiting.' She knew the answer to every question I had."

Jose worked diligently with Banks and Gauthier until the call he waited so long for finally came. Banks delivered the good news: He was finally going to be a naval officer, and Jose was euphoric.

"It was like winning a marathon," he remembered. "I slept so good the day after. I'm pretty sure I didn't even move. A hundred pounds of stress just came off, and I could finally sit back and enjoy it for a little bit."

Commissioning day came, and once again Jose strode through the hallway and into the kitchen, this time with his head held a little higher and Brittany by his side. With their sons fast asleep in their bedrooms and the crisp evening April air whipping through the house, Jose and Brittany stood face-to-face beneath the collage of family photographs. In a culminating moment of clarity, Jose lifted his right hand and proclaimed,

"I, Jose Garza, having been appointed an Ensign in the United States Navy, do solemnly swear ..."

Now, husband and wife, ensign and lieutenant, mother and father to three sons, and acute care nurse and nurse practitioner, the Garzas are stationed together at the Naval Medical Readiness Training Command in Sigonella, Italy. Jose, who knows all too well what it's like to receive help when it is most needed, is eager to continue to pay it forward. 🇺🇸

◀ Ensign Jose E. Garza stands at attention for a uniform inspection during Officer Development School in May 2020 at Naval Station Newport in Rhode Island. (Courtesy photo)

▼ Ensign Jose E. Garza (left), from Eagle Lake, Texas, swears in alongside his wife, Lt. Brittany Garza, during an Oath of Office ceremony at their home in Corpus Christi, Texas, on April 10, 2020. (Courtesy photo)



New Officer Recruiter Wins Top Recruiting Award

Navy Talent Acquisition Group Mid America

Story and photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Chris Williamson, NTAG Mid-America

▼ Rear Adm. Dennis Velez, commander of Navy Recruiting Command, presents the 2019 Master Chief Bakarian Award to Lt. Clair Dimmig, an officer recruiter at Navy Talent Acquisition Group Mid America, July 30, 2020.

ST. LOUIS – Lt. Clair Dimmig, assigned to Navy Talent Acquisition Group (NTAG) Mid America, received the highest honor in Navy recruiting, the Master Chief Anthony George Bakarian Award.

The award is given bi-annually by Navy Recruiting Orientation Unit (NORU) to the most distinguished first-term recruiter and is named after Master Chief Navy Counselor Anthony George Bakarian, who was a great leader and career recruiter.

Dimmig, a St. Louis native, was recognized for standing atop the pinnacle of officer recruiting production from July to December 2019. She credits her performance to her strong work ethic and being a fast learner.

"I had to be able to hit the ground running," said Dimmig. "I put in two nuclear propulsion officers and an intelligence direct commission officer in my first year. At the same time, I was

also processing multiple pilots, naval flight officers, surface warfare officers and prior service veterans."

On top of production, Dimmig is also tasked with keeping up with other important recruiting duties and responsibilities.

"An average day of work involves a lot of emails and paperwork," said Dimmig. "I have to setup presentations, career fairs and find a way to gain access to different companies and universities. The days I get to go out and speak about my experiences in the Navy are the best."

But even though being an officer recruiter requires a lot of work, Dimmig thoroughly enjoys her job.

"I really do enjoy being a recruiter," said Dimmig. "It's nice being able to come back to my hometown and provide opportunities to people who have never thought of joining the military before."

When Dimmig found out she had been selected for the award, she was surprised and also humbled.

"I feel like there's always more I can be doing," said Dimmig. "So, it was nice to be recognized for my performance."

Being ever so humble, Dimmig credits all her awards and accolades to the people she works with.

"I could not have had any success without the support from my coworkers and processors," said Dimmig.

Even though she received the news that she had won the award back in March, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and travel restrictions, she wasn't able to formally receive it from Navy Recruiting Command (NRC).

However, after a few months, Rear Adm. Dennis Velez, Commander of NRC, was able to make the trip to St. Louis to present Dimmig with the citation and the award during a ceremony at NTAG Mid America headquarters, July 30, 2020.

NTAG Mid America, part of NRC, recruits the next generation of Navy Sailors throughout areas encompassing Missouri, Kansas, central and southern Illinois, and a portion of Kentucky.



As part of a new initiative, Rear Admiral Dennis Velez would like to offer a Bravo Zulu to the following individuals for performing exceptionally during a unique time in Navy Recruiting.

June:

Buckle:

ABF2 Andrew Miller (NTAG Heartland)
EMN1 Kristofer Koslap (NTAG Portland)

Lapel pin:

Mrs. Kenisha Berry (N8)

August:

Buckle:

EN2 Gabrielle Anthony (NRD Miami)
EM2 Harley Broughton (NTAG Rocky Mountain)
LCDR Dominique Jackson (N10)

Lapel pin:

Mr. Anthony Jones (NTAG Mid America)

July:

Buckle:

EMN1 William Phoenix (NRD Phoenix)
NC1 Justin Short (NRD Richmond)
MA1 Ashley White (NTAG Ohio River Valley)
MA2 Seth Brossman (NTAG Pacific Northwest)
PS2 Sherane Blackman (NTAG Pittsburgh)
NCCS Frederick Tuiel (NTAG Pittsburgh)
NCCM Isaiah Lauko (NRD Phoenix)
NCCM Robert Leonard (NTAG Ohio River Valley)
LT Justin Liu (N3)
LT Robert Slye (N3)
OS1 Michael Tate (N3)
OS1 Jonathan Doberenz (N3)
YNCS Robert Schardt (NRC SEL)

Lapel pin:

Mr. Brett Statser (N2)

September:

Buckle:

OS2 Michael Francis (NTAG Carolina)
TM3 Christian Hernandez (NTAG San Antonio)
NC1 Justin Victor (NTAG Houston)
FT2 Cody Leaver (NTAG Nashville)
NC1 Donkay Degraffenreid (NTAG Jacksonville)

Lapel pin:

Mrs. Dean Stewart-Curry (N9)
Mrs. Glenda Carter (N9)
Mrs. Yolanda Adams (N8)
Mr. William Barauskus (N8)
Mr. Rich Vanmeter (N5)
Mr. Hair (N9)
Mrs. Romono (N8)
Mrs. Vincent (N8)





PORT CANAVERAL, Fla. (Sept. 23, 2020) The Navy's newest guided-missile destroyer, the USS Delbert D. Black (DDG 119), arrives at Port Canaveral. The ship's namesake is Master Chief Petty Officer Delbert D. Black, the Navy's first ever Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (MCPON), the highest ranking position for enlisted personnel. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Sarah Villegas)



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